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ABSTRACT

The study of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) presents challenges different from those faced by more commonly taught languages. LCTL educators are challenged by the unavailability of instructional resources and opportunities and lack of access to cultures. Only recently have LCTL teachers and researchers begun to identify problems and potential pathways toward collective solutions to these special challenges. They have identified five conditions for learning and teaching LCTLs in the United States: (1) Because learning an LCTL is a lifelong learning career and requires spending more time outside the classroom living the demands of the LCTL culture, the proper role of formal instruction is to enhance and sustain that career; (2) developing LCTL expertise is the only reasonable career goal for LCTL learners and teachers; (3) truly effective LCTL learning and teaching must be culture-based; (4) learners, teachers, and teacher trainers are responsible for their own programs to achieve expertise; (5) all LCTL learning and instruction must be adapted to local conditions. Discussion of this is followed by a statement and discussion of assumptions and the implications for learners, teachers, and the training of teachers. At the present time, there is no institution whose language programs address all these conditions and considerations or deal with the implications. (KFT)

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PATHWAYS
TO ADVANCED SKILLS

Learning Less Commonly Taught Languages:

An Agreement on the Bases for the Training of Teachers

by
Galal Walker
& Scott McGinnis

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Foreign Language Publications

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LEARNING LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES:
AN AGREEMENT ON THE BASES FOR THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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This document is not a transcript or in any way a complete record of the proceedings of the institute. It is rather an effort on the part of the authors to grasp a vast discussion that covered five days of extensive meetings, and to bring out the most critical and recurrent themes of the institute.

"We struck out along that trail for a couple of days."

Mark Twain
Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians

PREFACE

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

-- T. S. Eliot

This document was produced from the deliberations of the Task Force for Teacher Training in the Less Commonly Taught Languages, organized as a summer institute by the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages at Bryn Mawr College, June 23 to 28, 1991. Participants, their languages, and home institutions or sponsoring organizations are listed below:

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Learning Less Commonly Taught Languages: An Agreement on the Bases for the Training of Teachers

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INTRODUCTION: PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) is not conducted in a vacuum. The study of all foreign languages and the broader educational concerns of our society must be considered when deliberating the directions of an educational field. Teachers of the less commonly taught languages have not traditionally been part of the ongoing debates in foreign language study, but in the past few years representatives of these various languages have identified problems and potential pathways toward collective solutions. These emerging deliberations have set the LCTLs apart from other groups in the foreign language teaching community, not so much in terms of how educators discuss theory and practice, but more because of the unavailability of instructional resources and opportunities in this country and Western (European) learners' lack of access to cultures. In order to clarify their positions for the purposes of improving existing instruction and achieving better instructional opportunities, a task force of educators involved in instructing a wide variety of LCTLs has identified five interrelated areas of concern that are fundamental to the learning and teaching of LCTLs in the United States. These are the themes that permeate all levels of ongoing discussions on learning, teaching, and the training of teachers in the LCTLs.

1 Lifelong language learning career.

The overwhelming motivation for Americans to learn LCTLs is the intention to interact with the cultures of these languages. Learning to function more successfully within a culture is a never-ending process, whether the culture is native or foreign. Therefore, it is obvious that fulfilling the intention to function within a culture of a language that is far removed from American culture and the use of American English presents a complex and persistent challenge. The institutional resources available for training Americans to realize these intentions are woefully inadequate. Anyone who has learned to successfully meet the demands of living in an LCTL culture has spent more time gaining this ability outside formal instruction than in school. Learning an LCTL, then, is a lifelong learning career; the proper role of formal instruction is to enhance and sustain that career.

2 Expertise.

The only reasonable goal for learners and teachers of LCTLs is to develop expertise in their respective career fields. At any given time, learners of a language are somewhere on a continuum from nov-

ice to expert either in general ability in the language or in a specified set of skills in the language. Likewise, language teachers range from novice to expert in their general understanding and practice of teaching. Whether teachers or learners are at the novice stage or the expert stage of their respective careers creates qualitative differences in the way they conduct themselves. The movement from novice to expert is a deliberate and demanding process; it does not happen by accident, by virtue of native abilities, or by simply repeating novice behavior and exercising novice knowledge.

3 Culture-based learning and teaching.

If the intention of learners of LCTLs is to function in the LCTL culture, then the broader enterprise is that of intercultural communication, and the development of linguistic skills is incidental to it. Communication only works within an understood (even misunderstood) context, and a culture is the broadest identifiable context within which communicative abilities and language abilities operate. Experienced learners and teachers of LCTLs most commonly fpcus on culture as the cause of communicative difficulties. Most American learners are experienced with cultures within the broader Western cultural traditions or with cognate cultures that dominate academic institutions and popular media. Whether learners start with culture, language, or area studies, if they progress toward negotiating their needs within a noncognate culture, they will inevitably resort to analyses of that culture as a means of observing and assessing successful behavior. An expert learner is one who has demonstrable success interacting with members of the relevant society. An expert teacher of LCTLs is a person who is most able to assist learners in understanding the strategies and tactics of interacting with the cultures in question.

An expert learner is one who has demonstrable success with members of the relevant society.

4 Responsibility.

Learners, teachers, and teacher trainers are responsible for their own programs for achieving expertise. Learners of LCTLs will necessarily manage significant portions of their own study. It is assumed that learners will never learn enough in the *classroom* to finish a course successfully and will never learn enough in a *course* (or series of courses) to negotiate a foreign culture successfully. Beginning early in their careers as learners of LCTLs, successful learners assume responsibility for managing their own learning. In addition to providing learners with the optimal conditions for learning, expert teachers guide learners toward efficient learning management. At the same time, aided by training opportunities and research, teachers are responsible for negotiating their own way toward expertise.

5 Local Conditions.

Every locality has unique conditions. Collective efforts to solve problems across the broad diversity represented by LCTLs and American educational institutions can lead to successful outcomes only by adapting to local conditions. Attempts to draw sweeping conclusions about the study and teaching of LCTLs are at best interesting exercises without principled methods to make the conclusions address the strengths and weaknesses of any given language-learning setting.

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING LCTLs

Statement of Goal

If a general framework for LCTL study in the United States is to emerge from the deliberations among teachers of these languages, there must be agreement on the conditions that compose the foundations of such a framework. At the present time, the field recognizes a set of conditions that captures the empirical and experiential knowledge that subtends theory and practice. These conditions relate to a single goal for LCTL study from which five basic assumptions are derived. Each of these assumptions in turn has serious implications for learners, teachers, and the training of teachers.

The goal of all LCTL study is to enable learners to interact in and with the culture being studied.

The goal of all LCTL study is to enable learners to interact in and with the culture being studied. The culture being studied is hereafter referred to as C2. The ability to communicate in and with C2 is understood to represent a demonstrable capacity to perform appropriate social interactions. Communication in and with a culture involves a language or specific linguistic code within the context of communicative and cultural competencies.[1]

An analogy can be drawn between C2 interaction and the grammar of any given language. The command of grammar permits an individual to perform linguistically without consciously attending to the phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse combinations of the language. In essence, one has learned to speak a language when one has achieved the ability to talk and carry on a conversation at the same time. Likewise, an individual can function in C2 when he or she behaves in culturally appropriate ways and accurately communicates his or her intentions and perceives the intentions of others. Learning to do this in C2 is an ongoing progress toward developing expertise. Expertise in functioning in C2 for most learners of LCTLs means being able to perceive the intentions of members of C2 and to be a successful foreign participant in that culture. The cultural distance between American learners of LCTLs and members of C2, not to mention the obvious racial and ethnic differences in most cases, ensures that learners will not fully integrate into C2. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that successful learners of C2 will feel comfortable as foreigners, will be able to make natives comfortable interacting with them, but will never achieve "nativeness."

Assumptions

There are five basic assumptions that constrain and inform all activities of language learners, teachers, and teacher trainers.

1 The ability to function in C2 requires both procedural and declarative knowledge of C2.

Procedural knowledge, or "knowing how," is necessary but not sufficient for functioning as a nonnative in C2. Declarative knowledge, or "knowing what," will frame and guide the approach to procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is especially important to adult learners of a language as a scaffolding for the development of procedural knowledge.

All language use is made meaningful by cultural and social contexts. However, to the learner of a language, these

contexts are not obvious and must be made explicit by arranging and associating instances of performance within the target language, and by descriptions in the base language. In many instances these two methods of analysis are used by learners to build redundancy in their cognitive grasp of the language and culture being studied. At any given time, a learner's knowledge of a language may be implicit and/or explicit. That is to say that at one time a learner may be able to behave appropriately and explain that behavior; at another time, he or she may not be able to explain the appropriate behavior; at still another time, the learner may be able to explain appropriate behavior but not behave appropriately. We may conclude that in the creation of an effective learning environment, learners must have access to both declarative and procedural knowledge and teachers must include both types of knowledge in their teaching.

All language use is made meaningful by cultural and social contexts.

2 The primary responsibility of the learner is performance.

A learner is someone who is in the process of learning: this distinguishes a learner from a student, which is a role in an institution. For a student or anyone else to become a learner, it is necessary to have goals and to derive from the environment the means for achieving those goals. Thus, in a language program learners are responsible for extracting the maximum benefit from available resources--namely teachers and materials. Most learners of LCTLs in a formal learning environment spend the majority of their time studying on their own. This means that learners are responsible for managing their instruction outside of class where there is no interaction with or supervision by a teacher. Additionally, when learners exit a formal learning environment, whether at the highest level or at any lower level, if they are to continue toward expertise in the language, they have no choice but to assume responsibility for managing all of their learning in informal settings either within or outside of C2. If they are living within C2, then their primary responsibility is to manage interactions with members of that culture who are focused on advancing their abilities in the language; if they are outside of C2, then they must locate the materials that allow either maintenance or improvement of language skills and must maximize their use through efficient self-management, as well as manage interactions with representatives of C2. Thus, if the performance of learners is the basis on which all LCTL learning is conducted, and if the study of the LCTL is mostly self-managed, we conclude that the learners bear primary responsibility for their own performance and for utilizing the opportunities for performing.

Most learners of LCTLs in a formal learning environment spend the majority of their time studying on their own.

By emphasizing the performance of culturally prescribed behavior as the goal, we situate learners as the organizing constituent of language instruction. The best available analysis of C2 identifies the desired behaviors and prioritizes them to some degree. At the same time the basic rationale for providing organized instruction is that learners share fundamental cognitive capacities. Thus, learners approach the material in similar ways and are headed toward the same general goal. Despite common genetic predispositions and a lifetime in the base culture, there is

significant variation among learners. Learners vary in innate capacities and in acquired strategies for learning. They also vary considerably in their expectations concerning a program of instruction, in their assumptions on how the program of instruction operates, and in the ways they perceive conforming to any given program of instruction.

The focus on how learners perform targeted skills provides another major commonality. To acquire a specified skill or set of skills all learners travel basically the same track of simulated and exploratory performance of that skill. In basic terms, any targeted behavior is learned by performing that behavior. However, the necessary performance of a behavior may be approached in a variety of ways. There will be great variation in learners' abilities and their preferences for approaching how they perform behavior specified by analyses of culture and the pedagogical presentations.

Learners vary in innate capacities and in acquired strategies for learning.

Thus, we may conclude that the emphasis on learner performance necessitates explicit instruction about targeted skills, levels of skills, and accessibility of skills, while providing learners with the means to manage their own instruction efficiently.

3 Learning to function in C2 requires a program of lifelong learning.

Most LCTLs are demonstrably more difficult for American learners than the more commonly taught languages, namely Spanish, French, and German. The evidence of this difficulty is that institutions providing instruction in a wide range of languages find it necessary to devote varying amounts of instructional time to reach comparable levels of proficiency in various languages.[2] The experience of the field suggests that the difficulty derives from writing systems that differ from the alphabetic principle of the learners' base languages and from cultures that are not cognate with the Western tradition. This implies that the vast majority of institutions that provide opportunities to learn LCTLs cannot offer sufficient quantities of instruction for students to achieve an expert level of performance. For any given learner of an LCTL, formal instruction occupies a relatively short period of time in the long career path toward developing expertise. Responsible programs of instruction motivate learners to be involved with C2 in their daily lives and provide the means for making this involvement effective in gaining expertise.

4 The design of instruction is based on the best understanding of the learning process.

Although our understanding of learning is inadequate in any absolute sense, enough is known to provide a rationale for constructing learning environments that attend more to the needs of learners than to the convenience of teachers and institutions. The parameters of a formal learning environment may be thought of as a set of constraints imposed on the instructional materials, the teachers, and the students of a particular program. Some of the constraints on the formal learning environment are common in instructional programs. Other constraints, if recognized, would cause radical changes in the way LCTL instruction is currently conducted.

Learners perform skills in a sequence that progresses from simple to complex.

In terms of skill getting, the first constraints are those that relate to the scheduling of learner performance. In progressing from novice to expert, learners perform skills in a sequence that progresses from simple to complex, that typifies short-term and long-term goals, and that allows sufficient time to acquire those skills. Learners of LCTLs consistently confront skills and sets of skills that are significantly unlike their prior linguistic and cultural experiences; therefore, learner of LCTLs must spend more time in mastering those skills.

The relationship between learning and the environment in which learning is conducted is an important but often overlooked aspect of the language learning process.

At any given point in a program of instruction, a learner is at a particular skill level. The more aware learners are of where they are in the development of a desired capacity to perform, the more able they are to manage and judge the efficacy of their instruction. Thus, establishing goals and assessing progress toward those goals are crucial information to learners. In addition, successful learners need a basic awareness of the interrelationship between the targeted C2 skills in order to avoid attempting to develop performance capabilities for which they do not have the sustaining skills.

Every learner has a unique perception of the learning environment. Although a particular class is composed of a number of individuals who belong to the same group because of similar abilities and experiences, individual learners may react differently to any given instructional initiative. This implies that successful learners must be prepared to discover aspects of the instructional situation that advance development and to work to compensate in areas where an individual weakness hinders the desired development.

The relationship between learning and the environment in which learning is conducted is an important but often overlooked aspect of the language learning process. Learners do not usually demand, and institutions and teachers do not usually provide, physical learning environments for languages that are significantly different from those for any other instructional purpose. Given the deficiencies of the physical aspects of the learning environment, learners and their teachers are required to construct a nonphysical environment favorable to language learning. This is accomplished primarily through offering culturally appropriate social interactions modeled by the teacher and mental imagery derived from study materials. The efficacy of C2 native instructors and vivid media—video and audio—emerges from this carryover effect to the learning situation. The more learners psychologically enhance their learning environment by gleaning appropriate images from their study, the more they will extract from the instructional opportunities prepared for them by their instructors. Because the learning process spans both formal and informal learning situations, the ability to construct a maximally effective learning environment is a valuable means for moving toward expertise.

The learning process requires learners to attend to the context in which a behavior is practiced and learned. Every instance of learning occurs in a particular context. This implies that learning a specified skill depends on the understanding of the context in which the learning occurs. Languages are huge symbolic systems that are imbued with meaning by context that

is in turn provided by an even larger symbolic system: culture. Thus, language must be learned within a cultural context. The more learners are able to discriminate between the contexts imposed by their base culture and those imposed by C2, the more able they are to develop the prerequisite memories for efficiently solving problems in C2 and to construct the redundancies that facilitate the recollection process.

The learning process requires learners to attend to the context in which a behavior is practiced and learned.

Learning to function in C2 is tremendously complex. The human brain is the most complex entity in the known universe, and a culture and its language are the most complex products of the interactions of human brains. Thus, there is no chance to underestimate the complexity of the process of learning to function in a foreign language and culture. However, learners manage to learn, teachers manage to teach, and researchers manage to discover generalities about how the brain learns. Although a learner is not compelled to have explicit knowledge of the learning process, the more learners understand how the learning process shapes the learning environment, the more likely learners will be to emerge from a formal learning environment with functional, if implicit, knowledge of the learning process as it pertains to a specific language.

5 The efficacy of a learning environment is realized by systematic assessment and feedback in reference to specific goals.

Assessment is the basic means of keeping our bearings within the complexities of the foreign language learning environment. The prerequisite for systematic assessment is the establishment of explicit long- and short-term goals. If learners do not know where they are headed along the continuum toward expertise, assessment of where they are can have little more than the immediate emotional impact of being approved of by their teachers or of completing a unit of instruction. Assessment is most effective when all participants in the learning environment share in the knowledge of how effective everyone's efforts are in advancing toward expertise. In a fully amplified assessment system, teachers and learners learn from one another, and both affect the conduct of the overall learning program. Thus, assessment and feedback comprise a mutually engaging process among all participants in a foreign language learning environment.

Implications

Working under an assumed goal and basic assumptions has radical consequences. The goal and the assumptions presented here are not statements that anyone involved in foreign language education would contest. However, establishing the stated goal and constructing instruction on these assumptions would fundamentally change the way foreign languages are taught. There are far-reaching implications for all aspects of language instruction, but here we simply want to address the implications for learners, teachers, and the training of teachers.

As participants with full responsibility for their abilities to benefit from the learning environment, learners are successful in proportion to their capacity to work toward the goal within the constraints of these assumptions.

Implications for Learners:

1 The knowledge of C2 behavior facilitates the ability to function in C2.

To achieve their intentions in C2, learners must involve themselves with two interrelated domains of knowledge: linguistic knowledge and contextual knowledge. By attending to both domains and by continually contextualizing behavior within C2, the learner proceeds toward expertise. In this process, learners discover the meaning by which a new behavior is transferred to short-term memory and encode the behavior redundantly in terms of sound, pattern, meaning, situation, and symbol, thereby developing long-term memory in C2 and L2.

Learners demonstrate knowledge by performing C2 behaviors that have been observed in C2 and identified as appropriate to a particular level of instruction. At any given time, then, learners either perform skills that are observable C2 behaviors or work toward performing such skills. The analyses that have identified the appropriate C2 behaviors to be practiced and that identify the skills that sustain these behaviors can emerge as either explicit or implicit knowledge in learners. Implicit knowledge is performable but not explicable; explicit knowledge is explicable but may not be performable. Thus, at any given time learners may or may not be able to explain an appropriate C2 behavior even if they are able to perform the behavior. However the more explicit knowledge learners have, the more capable they are of observing and analyzing the process of learning to function in C2.

To achieve their intentions in C2, learners must involve themselves with two interrelated domains of knowledge: linguistic knowledge and contextual knowledge.

2 The learner performs C2 behaviors.

Learner performance is another proportional factor. The more learners perform appropriate C2 behaviors the more successful they will be in learning to interact with C2. In order to succeed, learners must find ways to perform and to evaluate their performance. This means learners must recognize the variety of ways to access any given C2 behavior and then make sure that the approach to that behavior does not stop short of actually performing that behavior. Learners are responsible for performing targeted behaviors and discovering the possible ways to perform the targeted behaviors. Although the teacher may assume responsibility for providing the opportunities to perform, the learners themselves step onto the stage both physically and psychologically. Throughout the process successful learners assess their own behavior in light of experiences and goals. They observe parallel behaviors of other learners and constantly evaluate the learning environment in terms of the quantity and quality of performance opportunities. While assessing their individual progress learners are cognizant of personal goals, both long-term and short-term, and constantly reassess these goals in light of ongoing learning experiences.

3 Learners act on the understanding that gaining expertise in an LCTL is a lifelong process.

If there is to be significant progress toward expertise, learners of an LCTL will realize sooner or later that functioning in C2 results from persistence in accumulat-

ing performing experience rather than from any innate abilities they might individually possess.[3] Most people can learn an LCTL if they rely on their innate abilities to sustain sufficient amounts of study and practice and if they develop strategies for long-term learning. As learners increase in their knowledge of C2, they develop strategies for managing their own individual learning careers and, thus, progress toward self-managed instruction. Formal instruction is an important, even crucial, component of a learning career that ultimately leads to expertise in C2. However, it will always be a chronologically minor portion of a language-learning career. Thus, a learner's success in gaining expertise in an LCTL is increased by an ability and a willingness to operate under the assumption that this is an ongoing process that must be practiced for a lifetime.

4 Learners are attentive to the process of achieving their goals.

Each learner of an LCTL is prepared to learn skills, which necessitates an awareness of practice and an awareness that sufficient practice over time leads to the desired abilities. Learners further realize that there is more than one approach to attaining a desired skill; therefore, in order to identify an optimum approach, learners explore the variety of approaches the learning environment provides for attaining a skill. As they gain experience in the learning environment and move toward expertise, learners recognize that there are stages toward gaining a skill or a category of skills and that there are relationships among skills and sets of skills that prescribe the order in which those skills are best learned. Learners do not persist in trying to master a skill if they lack the necessary precursory skills.

Learners are cognizant of the strengths and weaknesses of their learning environment and identify the incentives and disincentives that come with that environment. They realize there are opportunities to pursue learning outside of the formal learning environment but are at the same time aware that an informal learning environment may misdirect their efforts because they lack certain linguistic or cultural knowledge.

Learners look around. They are aware of more than just the linguistic code, and they examine the contexts that give a sample of language a specific meaning in a specific social interaction within a particular culture.

5 Learners recognize assessment and feedback as necessary to their own success.

Learners who are oriented toward developing expertise are open to evaluation and responsive to the feedback generated by the evaluation process. They interpret the feedback in terms of the defined goals of a course or a program of study. The affective aspects of evaluating feedback—that is, whether one feels good or bad about one's grade—are secondary to the information about the learners' progress toward defined goals.

While learners are being evaluated, they assess their personal experience within the learning environment by seeking opportunities to interact with members of C2 outside of class and by evaluating how well the learned behavior conforms to the social expectations there. Learners also seek to have the behavior they have learned in the formal situation checked against a version of communicative needs that is not directly connected to their own particular learning environment. In other words, learners are willing to be tested for

proficiency. When interacting with members of C2 who are not members of their learning environment, learners develop a cautious approach to interpreting feedback on their linguistic skills. Learners will neither be carried away by lavish praise nor driven to despair by difficulty or a failure to communicate. If they are committed to the idea of a lifelong learning career, they understand that a communicative failure at one time is sure to be followed by later successes.

Implications for Teachers:

Because the foundations for LCTL study are based on the needs of learners, the implications for teaching are inextricably bound to the necessities of learning. In almost every instance the role of a teacher is to provide optimal learning opportunities. In providing these opportunities the teacher exercises great responsibilities, but the teacher is not responsible for whether or not any particular student chooses to take advantage of the opportunities and become a learner.

1 A teacher of C2 creates the opportunities to learn both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge of functioning in C2.

The biggest demand on the teacher's creativity is the need to present opportunities to perform C2 behavior. In order to create a C2 context, the teacher must know as much about the learner's culture as about the C2. This is one reason why a team of teachers that includes members of both C2 and the learners' culture is most effective in teaching languages of noncognate cultures. A person who has adequate knowledge in both C2 and the learners' culture is rarely found. Furthermore, a person who typically represents C2 has never experienced being a foreigner in C2.

Because inexperienced learners of a noncognate C2 are incapable of creating appropriate C2 contexts, the teacher must use the resources of both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge to establish those contexts. Performing a C2 behavior cannot have any lasting benefit if the people doing the performing do not understand the meaning of what they are doing. Context creates the meaning, and performing a targeted behavior within a context presents opportunities for the learner to develop redundant encoding that is crucial to the automaticity required of an individual reacting in and with C2.

Creating the contexts for performing C2 behaviors is just the first step. The teacher also identifies the skills and, perhaps, subskills that subtend the desired behavior and devises drills and exercises that ensure that these skills are in place before the performance of the targeted behavior is required. In doing this the teacher creates a multitude of opportunities for the learner to gain implicit knowledge of C2 behavior and supplements that with declarative knowledge that is most likely to become the learner's explicit knowledge of C2 behavior.

2 The teacher creates the opportunities for the learner to perform C2 behavior.

Having identified the behaviors and analyzed the skills that subtend the behaviors, the teacher provides the learners with a variety of approaches to C2 performance. Once the learners perform the skills that are prerequisite to a specified behavior, the teacher ensures that the actual targeted behavior is reached and performed.

In addition to presenting the C2 behaviors that are the content of courses, the teacher trains students to manage their own instruction. At the beginning levels of instruction, the teacher instructs the learners how to utilize the resources of the course, providing the learners with the means to exploit all of the course's resources and to effectively manage their learning outside of the classroom. At higher levels of instruction, the teacher attends to the learners' abilities to manage their learning in informal settings.

Throughout a course of instruction, a teacher compares assessments of learners' performances to the stated long- and short-term goals of the learning program. The teacher clearly reports these assessments to the learners and provides the means to interpret those assessments. The teacher solicits learners' evaluations of the learning environment and responds as much as possible both to the learners' concerns and the revealed deficiencies of the learning environment.

3 The teacher promotes the lifelong learning career of the learner of C2.

In the early stages of formal instruction, the teacher builds the foundation of a lifelong learning career for the learners by demonstrating that continual and repeated performance rather than innate ability is the crucial factor in learning to function in C2. Without this emphasis on performance over time, learners cannot gain expertise.

The most important factor in sustaining a lifelong language learning career is the learners' ability to manage their own learning.

The teacher furthers this long-range view of language learning by inculcating learning strategies through the design of the course and ongoing interactions with the learners.

The most important factor in sustaining a lifelong language-learning career is the learners' abilities to manage their own learning. The teacher advances this capacity by providing a progressive means for learners to assume responsibility for their own learning and by slowly relinquishing control of the learning management process as the formal language instruction advances. Particularly at the upper levels of instruction, where learners have control of language-specific content and language-learning strategies, the teacher identifies instruments for language maintenance and improvement that can function outside of formal learning environments and provides the training for the effective use of those instruments.

4 The teacher provides a comprehensive presentation of the targeted C2 behavior.

Because this entire enterprise pertains to skill building, the teacher first identifies the most appropriate behavior and the skills necessary for the performance of that behavior.

This entails providing sufficient time to acquire the skill through practice and presenting a variety of ways to implement the practice. The teacher presents skills that are appropriate to the levels of instruction in terms of sets and subsets of skills, and guides learners to the most effective use of their practice time.

In order to provide learners with a sense of interacting with C2 and with the means for evaluating the efficacy of C2 behaviors learned in class, the teacher encourages learners to take advantage of opportunities to practice C2 behaviors outside of the classroom, while advising them on the advantages and disadvan-

tages of such practice at any particular level of development.

Perhaps one of the most important results of implementing this implication is the need for the teacher to establish the expectation that learners interpret and create C2 behavior in the context of C2. This means that a teacher must encourage the learners to resist the natural tendency to confine context to the classroom situation or to their own culture. Otherwise, learners risk developing L2 skills with C1 references. If learners follow this path and learn to speak an LCTL using the communicative strategies of American English, their careers in that LCTL will be hampered forever by episodes of displeasing interaction with C2 members.

The teacher presents skills that are appropriate to the levels of instruction in terms of sets and subsets of skills.

5 The teacher guides and informs the learning process through a systematic program of assessment and feedback.

The reasons for evaluating learners is to provide a basis for advising them and making changes in the learning environment. To make evaluation effective, the teacher provides feedback that is understandable to the students in terms of course goals and the learners' own goals. In order to gauge the degree to which the formal instruction reflects the communicative demands of the culture and society as a whole, the teacher makes proficiency testing available to learners and uses the information gained by such testing to advise learners on how well they might fare in the actual culture and society. Data generated by proficiency testing are also used to judge how effective the overall instruction within the learning environment. In addition to proficiency testing, the teacher encourages interaction with members of C2. But in order to make this interaction effective for advancing the learners' capacity to interact with C2, the teacher systematically provides the means to interpret both implicit and explicit assessment of the learners' C2 behavior by members of C2 who are not connected to the formal language learning environment.

Implications for Training of Teachers:

The conditions for learning a less commonly taught language, not unlike most social constructs, are based on a spherical flow of information among learners, teachers, and trainers. When we reduce the system and convert it to a linear metaphor, we gain sympathy for Bertrand Russell's perceptive interlocutor: "It's turtles all the way down." That is what a woman—a member of an audience on the lecture circuit—is reported to have replied when Russell challenged her statement that the world rode on the back of a turtle by asking, "And, My Dear, on what is the turtle riding?" When looking for a way to grasp the system with the intent of doing some engineering on it, the system has to stop somewhere. In the deliberations of the task force, that stopping point was teacher training. In other words, training is the last turtle.

To give this turtle some footing, no matter how precarious, we assume that the training of teachers of LCTLs is best done when constrained by the goal and assumptions stated in this document. The implications these constraints have for teacher training pertain to the development of teachers from novice to expert in terms of their command of theory and practice.

1 Knowledge is conveyed through theory and practice.

Training teachers of LCTLs involves imparting both declarative and procedural knowledge about learning and teaching. This knowledge is conveyed through the generalized concepts of theory and practice. Theory is the declarative knowledge derived from the range of discipline knowledge that pertains to language learning and from the study of the practice of language learning itself. In other words, theory is simply the discourse that generates discussions and deliberations concerning the process of developing expertise for learners of these languages.

Practice, on the other hand, is conveyed by both declarative and procedural knowledge. The presentation of practice is declarative. It is the explanation that ties what is to be done to the theory of the field. The implementation of practice is procedural. It is the physical manifestation of theory and practice.

In the conduct of teacher training, getting theory into the mix is no easy task. Teachers who are being trained rarely want to go beyond the presentation of practice. In fact, they often find the presentation of practice itself to be tedious and a hindrance to the implementation of practice. There are good reasons for this. One is that the theories have not been thought out or adequately articulated in terms of foreign language learning. Another is that teachers generally have too limited a view of what it means to be an expert. Nonetheless, the conceptual power and the creative freedom that a command of theory provides a practitioner are of sufficient value to merit intensive attention toward integrating theory and practice in the conduct of teaching.

2 The purpose of training is to provide the means of moving from novice to expert.

In teaching, as in learning, there is a qualitative as well as a cumulative difference between the novice and the expert. Not only do the experts know more, the experts can do more with what they know. O'Malley and Chamot describe the distinction between novice and expert as an increasing capacity to:

- **Perceive recurring patterns.**
- **Represent problems in terms of abstract features.**
- **Reorganize approaches to problems.**
- **Develop memories for problem-solving information.**
- **Develop domain-specific knowledge.**[4]

In other words, experts act as if they have access to theory. It should be noted that this can be demonstrated as either explicit or implicit knowledge on the part of a teacher. But when a person becomes a trainer, the demands of the task require that the knowledge be made explicit.

3 Training enables teachers to act as molders of lifelong language learning careers in the LCTLs.

Training is concerned with formal instruction and the teacher's role in instruction. Teaching is constrained by the needs of the learner, and those needs extend beyond the formal learning environment. Training brings this realization to the teachers.

Training prepares the teacher to interpret culture as learner performance. Because culture is the ultimate frame for

all foreign language learning, the presentation of culture and the relation of culture to meaning and language are in the background of all training activities. Culture as a means of constructing collective and individual realities is closely related to theories of meaning and memory. What any cultural or linguistic behavior means and how much of it is retained in any given memory is strongly influenced, if not determined, by a particular culture.

In the presentation of practice, the role of culture is conveyed in terms of various C2 discourses: the ways of talking about achievement culture, informational culture, and behavioral culture,[5] interculture and classroom cultures, revealed culture, ignored culture, and suppressed culture, for example. In the implementation of practice, training attends to the learning environment is a cultural construct—that is, the teacher as the creator of a classroom culture that permits learners to socialize progressively according to C2 standards. Within the classroom culture that is highly informed by C2, the teacher identifies appropriate C2 behaviors and creates simulations of those behaviors to familiarize the learners with incidents of C2 behavior.

Our day-to-day experiences are sufficient to demonstrate that learning to function in any culture, including one's native culture, is a continually evolving process. Therefore, the concept of a lifelong career of learning to function in C2 is not difficult for the trainer to establish. However, training has to provide the teacher with a rationale for emphasizing culture in this way. Among all the foreign languages taught in our institutions, the LCTLs are the easiest languages for which to supply that rationale. Because most LCTLs are not related to the commonly taught foreign languages, they are typologically divergent from the linguistic expectations of the learner. Structural complexities can be isolated, and divergent and complex orthographies can be found. But more importantly, the cultures that subtend these languages are at a far remove from Western tradition and, thus, do not share important perceptions provided by the learners' culture.

This difficulty has been demonstrated in a practical way by the institutions that teach the most foreign languages the most often and, more to the point, that keep the most extensive records on the amount of institutional resources that go into the various languages. As part of their management of the instruction of various languages, the Foreign Service Institute and the Defense Language Institute have ranked languages into four levels of difficulty for achieving specified levels of proficiency by their American students. These rankings assume a proportional relationship between the amount of institutional resources that go into the instruction of a language and the difficulty of learning and instructing that language. The vast majority of less commonly taught languages constitutes the higher levels of difficulty in these groupings, whereas the most commonly taught languages are found in the ranks of the least difficult.[6]

. . . the Foreign Service Institute and the Defense Language Institute have ranked languages into four levels of difficulty for achieving specified levels of proficiency by their American students.

Although these practical considerations should not be stressed to the point that they discourage both teachers and learners, there is no way to avoid the matter of difficulty permanently. The issue of

difficulty is best addressed in the learning and teaching of LCTLs by taking into account what we know about the learning process and achieving the goals of instruction, and thereby structuring learning in a way that encourages and facilitates lifelong learning.

Training analyzes the learning process in terms of the roles of institutions and the people involved in delivering the instruction. The fundamental understanding about institutions is that learning to function in C2 extends far beyond the capacities of any institution to deliver sufficient formal instruction. The consequences of this are that responsible institutions must prepare individuals to learn on their own; that is, to become ultimately managers of their own instruction. Training attends to the differences between learner-managed and teacher-managed coursework and self-managed learning outside formal instruction. The teachers' responsibilities require that they be trained to prepare for that transition by providing both the opportunities for acquiring skills and the materials for acquiring them.

Training attends to the differences between learner-managed and teacher-managed coursework.

Despite the crucial role of institutions, success in the study of LCTLs depends on the individuals involved. Successful learners come to manage their own careers with the help of teachers and materials. Successful teachers come to manage their own careers with the assistance of training and research. Successful trainers provide the theoretical, practical, and material resources that support the environments wherein learners and teachers can succeed.

4 Training provides teachers with the means to use the theory and practice of language learning and teaching.

The first concern of any program of training should be whether or not the benefits of that training can and will be realized in specific learning environments within specific institutions. Teachers who find their training to be significant and potentially transformational but who finally decide that their training cannot be applied within their home schools have been inadequately trained. This means that the training must include the theory and practice of delivering instruction within institutions. Therefore, training will include theories as they pertain to institutionalized education. Practice pertains to surveying institutions and interpreting the results to identify specific local conditions. Once such conditions are known, then the implementation of practice attends to developing curriculum by adapting to the local conditions. After the curriculum has been designed and implemented, a follow-up program of surveys that reports to the training component as well as the teachers involved in the specific curriculum would contribute to an ongoing development of our understanding of how our institutions are meeting our perceived needs.

5 Training provides teachers with the means to assess the performance of learners and programs.

The implication here is that a training program will provide specific instruction in setting and stating the long- and short-term goals of a course of instruction and in devising assessment instruments that can be readily interpreted in terms of

those goals. Interpreting and reporting about assessment serve both formative and summative functions, which benefit the learner, the teacher, the program of language instruction, and, ultimately if the system of reporting is fully amplified, the training component. Training and assessment address the motivational needs of the learners while supporting the maintenance of standards in a particular course and in a particular program of language instruction.

ADAPTATIONS TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

The conditions for learning a less commonly taught language in a program of formal instruction—the goal, assumptions, and implications that we have been discussing—form the foundation for a program of courses that compose an ideal curriculum and the plan for learner participation in that program—that is, the syllabus. Stating the conditions for an ideal program is itself of passing interest, but it provides no possibility for improvement. Every program is implemented in some particular locality that is characterized by the strengths and weaknesses of available institutional and human resources. Stating ideal conditions is valuable only if the ideal program can be adapted to local conditions. The steps toward achieving this adaptation include procedures for discovering the local resources, relating that information to the conditions for learning a less commonly taught language, stating the local conditions as factors for planning and implementing a curriculum, and designing a curriculum based on the best possible set of options.

Stating ideal conditions is valuable only if the ideal program can be adapted to local conditions.

Language teaching institutions are not unfamiliar with the practice of determining local conditions. In both academic and nonacademic institutions, external and internal reviews are commonly conducted, and new personnel routinely set about to discover the resources of an institution. What is proposed here is a systematic procedure that is designed to be more diagnostic than it is remedial. This procedure would entail the creation of a two-tiered survey instrument: a general survey of a local language teaching capacity, and a survey of an actual language-specific program. The general survey could come out of organizations such as the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, and the language-specific surveys from the various organizations represented in the Council. The general survey would generate data on the language or languages being taught, including who is teaching, who is learning, and how much of the learning occurs within formal instruction and under what conditions. It is the issue of conditions that provides the most critical data. These conditions will essentially be discovered by determining to what extent the previously mentioned implications for learners, teachers, and trainers can be realized locally.

Such data would then be referenced to the entire set of conditions for LCTL learning to see how to evaluate how successfully the learning process can incorporate the five basic assumptions that

underlie LCTL learning, after which we could state local conditions as factors in realizing the conditions for learning a less commonly taught language. One could postulate a series of "if-then" statements such as "If this local constraint exists, then the following options constrain and prioritize language learning and language teaching." Once various constraints and options are made apparent, it will be possible to develop a curriculum and a syllabus that utilize the best available set of local options.

A readily available survey instrument for assessing local conditions, such as that discussed above, would most probably be used to conduct a program evaluation. However, it would also be available for institutions to determine the extent of their capacity to teach less commonly taught languages and, thus, could help to avoid failures by clearly indicating whether an institution has the capacity to implement this kind of instruction successfully. This prophylactic function can apply to the LCTL field in general as well as to the specific language instruction fields.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE WISDOM ON INDIVIDUAL PRACTITIONERS

The task force from whose deliberations this document was created consisted of nineteen academics who have been active and influential in the teaching of eight languages or groups of languages in the United States. Even though no single person would claim to have generated all of the ideas presented here, in the course of the deliberations the members of the task force generally agreed on the five principal considerations and the conditions for learning less commonly taught languages. At the present time, there is no institution whose language programs meet all of these conditions and considerations, much less reflect all the implications for learners, teachers, and training of teachers. Thus, we have a situation in which individuals agree on the components of a vision of second language learning but do not implement it as a whole. This discrepancy between what we know and what we do is a promising area for productive research and action.

Particularly given the core of agreement on the goal, assumptions, and principles of instruction in the LCTLs, we cannot claim anything remarkable with respect to their content. What we will claim is that a thoughtful and thorough implementation of these components would result in an approach to LCTL instruction that is truly remarkable, and indeed revolutionary.

ENDNOTES

1 Hammerly 1982, pp. 214, 513ff.: Sperber and Wilson 1988, pp. 1-60.

2 As reflected in the following table from the Foreign Service Institute, taken from Walker 1989, p. 24.

3 O'Malley and Chamot 1990, p. 149.

4 O'Malley and Chamot 1990, p. 179, after Anderson 1985.

5 Hammerly 1982, p. 513.

6 Walker 1989, p. 24.

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Notes